

Message Text

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EO 11652: NA
TAGS: AGAO
SUBJ: EXPANDED ROLE OF GAO AND GAO VISITS TO SELECTED POSTS

REF: STATE 207030

1. EMBASSY HAS NOT KEPT A CENTRAL FILE ON GAO VISITS, SO WE ARE NOT CERTAIN THAT FOLLOWING INFORMATION REPRESENTS COMPLETE HISTORY OF ALL GAO VISITS IN PAST TWO YEARS. ALSO, SOME OF THE EVALUATIONS ARE BASED ON RECOLLECTION BY INDIVIDUAL OFFICERS RATHER THAN WRITTEN RECORDS AND IN SOME CASES NO ONE INVOLVED IN A GIVEN VISIT REMAINS AT POST TO SUPPLY ANY INFORMATION.

2. WHAT WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO COMPILE, THROUGH MID-AUGUST 1978, INDICATES THAT THERE WAS ONE VISIT IN THE SECOND HALF OF 1976, 5 VISITS IN 1977, AND 4 VISITS IN THE FIRST HALF OF 1978, CLEARLY AN UPWARD TREND. THE LENGTH OF THE VISITS RANGE FROM 3 DAYS TO SIX WEEKS, THE AVERAGE BEING 16 DAYS. THERE DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE ANY SIGNIFICANT TREND IN THE LENGTH OF VISITS. THE SIZE OF THE TEAMS, USUALLY TWO OR THREE PERSONS, APPEARS REASONABLE, BUT THERE HAVE BEEN SOME CASES WHERE THE QUALIFICATIONS OF THE TEAM MEMBERS IN RELATION TO THE SUBJECT MATTER WERE AT LEAST QUESTIONABLE. IN CASES WHERE A STUDY INVOLVES THE USE OF QUESTIONNAIRES, IT WOULD BE VERY HELPFUL IF THESE COULD BE SUBMITTED

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IN ADVANCE, COMPLETED AND RETURNED TO GAO HEADQUARTERS FOR APPROPRIATE ANALYSIS BEFORE THE VISIT, RATHER THAN DOING ALL THAT IN SITU.

3. THE POST DOES PROVIDE ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT AND OTHER SERVICES TO THE GAO TEAMS, BUT WE HAVE NOT FOUND THESE TO BE OVERLY BURDENSOME THUS FAR. IN SOME CASES, HOWEVER, THAS

BEEN A HEAVY DEMAND ON THE TIME OF INDIVIDUAL OFFICERS OF THE MISSION WITH SPECIALIZED KNOWLEDGE OF THE SUBJECT MATTER STUDIES, E.G. THE SECURITY OFFICER DURING THE 19-DAY VISIT OF THE TEAM INVESTIGATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF COUNTER-TERRORIST MEASURES.

4. WITH REGARD TO HOST COUNTRY REACTION, WE HAVE LITTLE OF NOTE TO REPORT. U.S. MISSION OFFICIALS ALMOST ALWAYS ACCOMPANY GAO TEAM MEMBERS ON VISITS TO GOC OFFICIALS. THESE MEETINGS HAVE BEEN UNEVENTFUL. HOWEVER, THERE HAS BEEN ADVERSE REACTION, PUBLIC AND PRIVATE, TO SOME OF THE PUBLISHED REPORTS. FOR EXAMPLE, SOME OF THE COMMENTS IN THE REPORT ON "REDUCING FERTILITY THROUGH SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHANGE IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES" WAS NOT WELL RECEIVED HERE, NOR WAS THE TIMING OF THE RELEASE OF THE REPORT ON DEA ACTIVITIES. IT IS CLEAR THAT IF THE GAO IS GOING TO EVALUATE AND COMMENT ON PROGRAMS PER SE RATHER THAN MERELY AUDIT THE USE OF FUNDS TO IMPLEMENT THE PROGRAMS, THEY ARE GOING TO HAVE TO TAKE A BROADER VIEW OF THE IMPACT THEIR REPORTS ARE LIKELY TO HAVE ON OUR RELATIONSHIPS AND FOREIGN POLICY OBJECTIVES IN OTHER COUNTRIES.

5. IT ALSO APPEARS CLEAR THAT A PROGRAM EVALUATION APPROACH SHOULD EMPLOY PROFESSIONALS IN PROGRAM EVALUATION METHODS WHO HAVE MORE THAN A PASSING FAMILIARITY WITH LOCAL LANGUAGE, CULTURE, HISTORY AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS AS WELL AS SOME SPECIALIZED KNOWLEDGE OF THE SUBJECT MATTER TO BE COVERED. MORE OFTEN THAN NOT THIS HAS NOT BEEN THE CASE FOR STUDIES CONDUCTED IN COLOMBIA. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WE NOTE, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT ONE AUDITOR, DEMONSTRATING ENVIABLE OMNISCIENT COMPETENCE, WAS INVOLVED IN THREE INVESTIGATIONS OF WIDELY DIFFERING SUBJECT MATTER, NAMELY: A) THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PEACE CORPS PROGRAMS, B) COLOMBIA'S CONTROL OF INSECTICIDES, AND C) COLOMBIA'S APPROACH TO IMMIGRATION PROBLEMS. IN THE PEACE CORPS STUDY, THE METHOD SELECTED FOR DETERMINING EFFECTIVENESS OF PROGRAMS INVOLVED DISTRIBUTING A 37 QUESTION QUESTIONNAIRE TO ALL PC VOLUNTEERS IN COLOMBIA. THE AUDITORS THEN SPENT FIVE OF THEIR DAYS COLLECTING AND TABULATING THE RESULTS. THIS COULD HAVE BEEN DONE IN WASHINGTON AT CONSIDERABLE SAVINGS TO THE USG AND DMIGT HAVE GIVEN SOMEONE PROFESSIONALLY EQUIPPED FOR THIS ASSIGNMENT SOME USEFUL BACKGROUND FOR A USEFUL EVALUATION. ASENSIO

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